



Wheatley Community Church Handbook

Who we are, what we do and why we do it.

2020 issue 4

The story so far

Wheatley Community Church was established in early 2015. This handbook will tell you about us, our heart & vision, how we are organised and how we operate. It contains information on the commitment members make and on how we take decisions as a Church.

Wheatley Community Church has grown from a vision, expressed in different ways, by local Christians with a desire to share God's love with their village. In the summer of 2014 a small group gathered to share their hopes for a fresh expression of church in Wheatley. The consensus was that a new fellowship would add to the diversity of God's Church and so strengthen our mission and service to our local community. This was very positively received by our friends in other Wheatley churches and beyond.

Our aim is to build a church where what we know and learn about God from the Bible is seen in action through our relationships and where we make God's love known to others through serving the wider community of Wheatley.

What we aim to be – Our vision

We believe we are being called by God to be an inclusive, accessible, welcoming and nurturing church. Shaped by His word, we respond to His lordship, His love and to this call by seeking to be –

- A community that is journeying, evolving and learning together with the Bible central to our teaching and our values. (Romans 12v16)
- A praying church, a place of significant fellowship and trust where individuals are encouraged and supported to grow and develop spiritually in their walk with God. (Acts 2v42)
- An all age church, welcoming and catering for children, young people and adults alike, sharing our lives informally through the week as well as through our organised meetings. (Romans 12vv9-13)
- A contemporary, lively and enthusiastic church, guided and equipped by the Holy Spirit and passionate about our faith and God's love for all people. (John 3v16)
- A church given to loving service, seeking to bring hope and practical support to those around us. (Galatians 6v10)
- A church committed to sharing our faith and inspiring others to discover the transforming love of Jesus. (Matthew 28vv18-20)
- A church concerned for the world we live in, seeking to bring God's justice, mercy and compassion. (Isaiah 1v17)

How we hope to get there

Our vision is to model a prayerful, loving, learning community, living for Christ in the heart of our wider village community. We will gather together - for instance on a Sunday morning – but we also aim to work out our vision by informally learning and serving together.

Our Sunday gatherings are informal and contemporary in feel. We use a range of formats to suit the venue, theme and speaker for each meeting. At these meetings we gather to learn from God's word and from each other, sharing our experience of faith in action in our lives. We celebrate and worship God through a mixture of contemporary and more traditional music and bring the needs of our community and beyond to God in prayer.

During the week members meet formally and informally to build friendships, support each other, study the Bible, pray and serve. Our focus is on our whole lives together as a worshipping community, seeking to let God guide us on our journey. We have an active social programme to which all are welcome, whether they regularly attend our church or not.

Who are we affiliated to?

At the moment we are an independent church with a leadership group drawn from people who have been active in the village and involved in ministry in other churches. This position is subject to annual review by the church membership.

Questions of affiliation will be taken by Church members in due course, informed by God. We are members of Wheatley Area Churches and the Evangelical Alliance.

What we believe

Wheatley Community Church has adopted the statement of faith used by the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). IFES is a non-denominational organisation that brings together Christians from all cultures, languages and Christian traditions. As members of the Evangelical Alliance we would also concur with their statement of faith, which complements the following.

The IFES doctrinal basis rests on the central truths of Christianity, as revealed in Scripture, including:

- The unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Godhead.
- The sovereignty of God in creation, revelation, redemption and final judgment.
- The divine inspiration and entire trustworthiness of Holy Scripture, as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- The universal sinfulness and guilt of all people since the fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation.
- Redemption from the guilt, penalty, dominion and pollution of sin, solely through the sacrificial death (as our representative and substitute) of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.
- The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and his ascension to the right hand of God the Father.
- The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration.
- The justification of the sinner by the grace of God through faith alone.
- The indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.
- The one holy universal Church which is the body of Christ and to which all true believers belong.
- The expectation of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Church Membership

Christian believers are members of the Body of Christ and the Family of God. Membership of a local Church is an expression of this. It is not like membership of an exclusive 'club': members of a local Church want to welcome others into the family of the Church. 'Membership' is a mechanism for decision-making, in a context of mutual support and mutual commitment to the mission of God in the world.

As members of Wheatley Community Church we can expect to both give to and receive from the Church community. The Church will offer loving fellowship, worship, teaching from the Bible, pastoral and practical support and opportunities to serve and reach out to friends and neighbours.

As Members of Wheatley Community Church we:

1. Seek to live lives that honour God as He enables and to make Jesus known
2. Agree to the Church's statement of beliefs
3. Share a desire to reach out to Wheatley and beyond, through prayer, friendship and service bringing hope and practical support.
4. Agree to promote love and unity within the Church and its wider community, to be ready to forgive and be forgiven and to put others' needs before our own.
5. Commit to attend Sunday services and church members' meetings whenever possible.

Becoming a full member of Wheatley Community Church

Anyone who confesses Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour and agrees with the Church's statement of beliefs may become a member of Wheatley Community Church. Those seeking membership should speak to one of the Leadership Group. New members will be invited to an informal pastoral meeting with two members of the Leadership Group, to hear their faith story, to answer any questions they may have about the Church and to explore what they hope to give and receive from membership. Following this, one of the members of the Leadership Group will bring their details to the next Church Members Meeting so their membership can be confirmed.

When someone seeking to join Wheatley Community Church has been involved with another church, contact may be made with the leaders of that church as an act of fellowship and to explore the gifts and needs of the new member together.

Those who do not feel ready to take the step of full membership, are encouraged to be an active participant in church life and activities, other than some aspects of leadership and the formal decision-making meetings (members meetings). To ensure they are able to input into how the Church develops, we will hold regular 'open forums'-meetings where key topics are discussed by members and non-members and where everyone's views can be heard.

It is our aim that the life of the Church will be as inclusive as possible for all and we encourage everyone, whether members or non-members to make Wheatley Community Church their spiritual home.

Associate Membership

There is also the option of Associate membership for situations such as–

- those who are still committed to WCC but away for a period (eg mission partners, students, short term work relocation),
- members of other churches who are only with us for less than one year but want to walk with us in our journey
- young people under the age of 16 who would like to show their commitment to WCC and who plan to transfer to full membership at 16 or
- anyone not active or present in the church for 6 months (as a prelude to removal from membership – see below).

Associate members do not have voting rights and their presence at members' meetings does not count towards a quorum. However, they will receive all the correspondence that full members receive and be able to contribute fully to all other aspects of church life, as availability allows. The option of associate membership will be discussed with those going away for a time, preferably before they leave.

Leaving the membership of Wheatley Community Church

Anyone wishing to leave the membership of the Church is asked to inform one of the Leadership Group, so that they may be prayed for and supported as they move. Members who move away or no longer attend the Church shall be contacted after three months to explore whether they wish to step down from membership or to become Associate Members. Associate Membership, is identical to full membership but without voting rights, as they may not be close enough to day to day church life to take an active part in decision making.

Any member who no longer confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, or no longer accepts the truths in the Church's statement of beliefs or in the principles of membership shall be encouraged to consider their situation before God. If after pastoral support the member does not change their view they shall be removed from the membership of the Church but with the hope that they will be welcomed back into membership at the earliest opportunity.

Church Governance

Church leadership

Wheatley Community Church is led by a Core Leadership Group, each of whom is initially elected by the membership, whose responsibilities include –

- Spiritual and pastoral oversight of the church as a whole
- Teaching programme coordination
- Oversight of corporate worship
- Pastoral care & Small group coordination
- WCC support of Mission work beyond Wheatley, in all its forms
- Strategic and visionary planning

Members of the Core Leadership Group must agree to the Church's statement of faith (What We Believe) and exhibit the characteristics of leaders outlined in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. They will have relevant experience in church life and organisation and a heart for service to the Wheatley Community, for pastoral care, seeing people compassionately as individuals, and for mission and outreach.

The Core Leadership Group is led by the WCC Pastor, who will initiate and lead annual reviews with each of the leadership team. The WCC Pastor is accountable in turn to the charity Trustees (see below).

WCC Charity Trustees

Constitution

Wheatley Community Church is a registered Charity. As such, matters of legal and financial compliance are managed by a board of Trustees. WCC Trustees must agree to the Church's statement of faith (What We Believe). They should also have skills and experience relevant to the oversight of church, organisation and/or charity governance.

This board is made up as follows –

- Up to two representatives of the WCC core leadership team (CLT).
- The Church Treasurer.
- Other church members with relevant experience or expertise, through nomination by members and after subsequent election by the membership (voting procedures are the same as for the leadership team – see below).
- The Chair of trustees will not be a member of the core leadership team and is proposed and elected by the other trustees from within their number.

Note:

- *The WCC Pastor is accountable to the charity Trustees and will normally report to, attend and take a full part in trustees' meetings, but will not serve as a trustee (as the trustees are effectively his employer).*

Areas of Responsibility

The following table explains how the responsibilities of the trustees overlap and complement those of the church leadership team -

Area of Responsibility	Trustees	WCC Core Leadership Team (CLT)
Legal compliance, including Charity law	Lead body	General requirement to observe, referring to trustees for guidance as needed.
The management of WCC and its resources in line with its declared charitable purpose	Lead body	General requirement to observe, referring to trustees for guidance as needed.
Membership matters and policy	Trustees to approve amendments to process and procedures, as embodied in Church Handbook	CLT to manage applications for membership, inc interviews and recommendations to membership.
Church elections	Trustees to approve amendments to process and procedures, as embodied in Church Handbook	CLT to manage election process, nominations for leadership and propose any changes to process to trustees for ratification.
Financial management, planning and reporting, including setting budgets and spending priorities	Budget developed jointly with the CLT. Trustees primarily responsible for monitoring and reporting on finances against agreed budget.	CLT take lead on setting vision and expenditure priorities for the church (inc giving). Budget developed jointly with the trustees. CLT responsible for all costs under their control.
Employment matters relating to the Pastor and any other church staff, including staff contracts and conducting annual reviews.	Trustees to approve process and procedures for staff appointment and to be primarily responsible for management of existing staff with respect to welfare, salaries, annual reviews, conflict resolution etc.	Pastor & CLT responsible for staff appointment process, job specifications, advertising, interview, candidate selection and line management.
Safeguarding (with church Safeguarding Officer) & Health & Safety (with H & S Officer)	Lead body	General requirement to observe requirements, referring to trustees for guidance as needed.

Key Support Roles

The church Health & Safety Officer and Safeguarding Officer will be nominated by and are accountable to the Trustees. The Church Administrator is also appointed by the trustees but is accountable to both the Trustees and the Core Leadership Team.

The Treasurer will be a Trustee but as there are particular, specialist skills needed for the role, he/she is selected by the trustees not the membership. The trustees are then collectively accountable to the membership for the management of church finances and for the performance of the treasurer.

Core Leadership Team & Trustee Election Process

- Each person being considered by the church for election to the Core leadership group or as Trustee should have a proposer and seconder (two separate members of the church) and their nomination should be brought to the leadership in writing. The present core leadership or trustees will then bring names to the following members meeting.

- Any church member may stand on their own merits. When voting, members should take into account whether the leadership and/or trustees reflect the diversity of the church.
- This decision is important enough to require a quorum of members to be present and for votes to be cast anonymously. The quorum will be 60% of the membership and the majority also 75% of the votes cast
- Members of the core leadership or trustees are elected to serve for a period of 4 years, after which they must seek re-election. Individuals may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms, after which they must take a sabbatical year before standing for re-election should they wish to serve another term, unless they are appointed as Pastor or in some other way a paid officer of the Church with a leadership role.
- Elections will only take place when an individual is initially standing or re-standing. Individuals are free to stand down at any point if they feel it is right to do so.
- All elections will be held at the next convenient members' meeting, with members notified well in advance (see 'How we make decisions' below).

Men, Women and Church Leadership

The church leadership position on this question, adopted in August 2017 after consultation with church members, is as follows:

- We are all one under Christ and are all called to be part of the ministry of all believers, as we work together to help build God's kingdom here in this place.
- The question of which roles men and women might play in this joint ministry is important but secondary* in that it is not one that is central to the Gospel or to why we live and work together as a worshipping community (**ie. an issue on which I have a view but on which I'm happy to worship and serve with others who sincerely hold different views*).
- We acknowledge that both egalitarianism and complementarianism are Biblically defensible positions and we respect those who sincerely hold both views within WCC.
- Finally, as the WCC leadership, we conclude that, while we respect those holding both views, we as a Church will continue to be egalitarian in practice and to seek to use the gifts of men and women to the full in the life of the Church.

The leadership team will seek to grow further in our understanding of both positions as we move forward together and confirm that both positions will be acknowledged in the teaching of the church whenever relevant passages or topics are covered.

How we take decisions

The day to day running of the Church is led by the Core Leadership Team & Charity Trustees (see list of responsibilities above). Together they are responsible for calling and organising regular business meetings of members, to be held approximately every three months. They will be accountable to this meeting for their leadership and decisions. At this meeting, members will have the opportunity to discuss and comment on the vision, organisation and leadership of the Church and to raise issues for the Leadership Team and/or Trustees to consider and address, as appropriate.

It will be the aim of these meetings to be encouraging (through sharing examples of what God is doing in Wheatley); challenging (developing our vision of the ways in which the Church and individuals can serve God in Wheatley) and decisive (in agreeing actions informed by God's word through the Holy Spirit that will bring God's blessing on the Village, the Church and its members). The Church meeting will also be the place where practical matters, including the use of financial and other resources by the Church will be decided. Full accounts will be presented at one of the members' meetings annually, for information and agreement, and it will be normal practice to provide a financial summary at other meetings.

While most decisions can be by consensus, some are important enough to require a quorum of members to be present and for votes to be cast anonymously. In this case, the quorum will be 60% of the membership and the majority also 75% of the votes cast. Those unavoidably prevented from attending the meeting may request a proxy vote. They should discuss this with a nominated member of the core leadership team, who will ensure the person is

fully informed and able to approach the vote prayerfully. Their vote will be anonymously presented in a sealed envelope to be included in the count. The nominated member of the core leadership team will be responsible for ensuring confidentiality.

Matters requiring a quorum and anonymous voting include:

- appointment of a Pastor or other paid spiritual leader;
- appointment of a new member of the Core Leadership Team and/or Trustees
- a decision to affiliate with any organisation and other issues at the request of either the Core Leadership Team, the Trustees or the membership.

We will also hold Open Forum meetings for all, whether members or not, for discussion of a wide range of topics. However, final decisions will only be taken at the members meetings.

How can I find out more?

email to office@wheatleycommunity.church or go to <http://wheatleycommunitychurch.org>

APPENDICES

1. Communion
2. The Authority of the Bible and its Use in Corporate Worship
3. Baptism

APPENDIX 1: Communion

Scripture References: Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-20, Luke 24:30, John 13:21-30, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, 1 Peter 3:18, Isaiah 53:5

What is communion?

Communion (also known as the Lord's Table or 'Eucharist' meaning 'Thanksgiving') is an important part of our shared life together as a church, instituted by Jesus as he celebrated his final Passover with his disciples. In I Corinthians 11, Paul describes Communion to the Corinthian Church.

Communion is a core expression of the Gospel message: Through communion we remember how Jesus gave himself completely so that we can have new life, forgiveness, and a fresh relationship with God (1 Peter 3:18). It is more than just a symbol of historical events: it is also a means of grace, that helps us (together) to look back and to look forward, because we are to share the bread and the wine 'until he comes'. It is both a memorial of the past and a celebration of what is to come.

The bread and wine are merely symbols of the body and blood of Jesus. The hands of all those involved are simply distributing the bread and wine: nothing that it said or done during this process changes the physical nature of the bread and the wine.

What does it mean to take part?

Communion is an act for believers and it would be normal for those who take part to have a clear understanding of their faith and to have made a serious and public confession of that faith. However, taking communion doesn't make you a Christian. It doesn't save your soul or get you to heaven. The intent is not for us to mindlessly perform a ritual, but to intentionally set aside time to remember what Jesus has done and why He did it.

Paul wrote that before taking communion, all who share in the bread and wine must examine their own heart and life (1 Cor 11:28-29). Accordingly, it would be normal for the leader to remind people of this and include a time of quiet or spoken confession as part of the preparation for communion.

Leading Communion

Communion at WCC may be led by any member of the church (or a visiting preacher) with the invitation of the church leadership team.

Communion is not a ritual to revere, but the celebration of Jesus whom we worship. We believe Jesus would be less concerned about the method of celebrating communion and more concerned that we celebrate it. It is something precious which we share together, as a unified body not as a collection of individuals, and this truth should be reflected in how we lead communion.

Normally the person leading would:

- Share some relevant passage(s) from the Bible.
- Explain what we are doing and why.
- Explain who communion is for (see above).
- Tie the act of communion into the rest of the service and allow sufficient time for quiet reflection and prayer
- Seek to vary the format to keep it fresh and alive and to invite participation. Examples include –
 - Adopt sections of liturgies from different traditions (which are consistent with our understanding of what communion represents), with sections which are said together.
 - Serve each other in turn, perhaps with a few words
 - Sometimes use one shared cup as a mark of unity and community as an alternative to individual cups.
 - As circumstances permit, stand in a circle and serve one another.

Frequency and timing of Communion

We are commanded to celebrate communion but without any indication about how often. Different Christian denominations have different traditions, ranging from weekly to once a year. We are currently including communion in our services once a month and this is generally felt to be appropriate.

Every other month, communion should ideally be taken before the children leave for their groups or as part of an all age celebration, so that both leaders and any participating children may take communion with the rest of the church.

Practicalities

- Bread: Gluten free, in order to respect some dietary requirements.
- Wine: Non-alcoholic or unfermented grape juice is to be used. Alcoholic wine may be offered as an option at the discretion of the person leading communion (use of other juice to be avoided).

Children and communion

When Paul gave instructions to the Corinthian church, he didn't spell out that communion was only for adults. So, it would seem logical not to exclude children who have committed their lives to Christ. However, Paul gives a warning that it is important that a person, whether an adult or child, can understand what the Lord's Supper is and have the maturity to be able to examine themselves before God.

It follows therefore that children may take communion, provided that they have their parents' permission and that their children and/or youth work leaders have been consulted. Practically, where children are present for communion, they should sit with their parents, guardians or the person who brought them to church; or if not available with their Sunday School teacher or youth group leader. The latter must be consulted beforehand if the parents/carer are not Christians.

APPENDIX 2: The Authority of the Bible and its Use in Corporate Worship

A. INTRODUCTION:

God has revealed himself in the Bible. God's word is precious, is full of power to change lives and has been pivotal throughout human history. All scripture is God breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), God's wisdom but human words that were revealed rather than dictated.

The Bible, which consists of Old and New Testaments alone, is reliable as a historically accurate document with sound translations in to English over the last century. Every word was inspired by God and therefore fully reliable in fact and doctrine. God created us and, in the Bible, tells about himself and what he requires of us. Without a clear revelation from God we would have no authentic message of authority to guide us through life. However, the Bible is not primarily about rules and regulations, it is God telling us about himself. Christian worship is therefore, in essence, a response to this revelation (Psalm 95). So, the reading and preaching of God's word are indispensable aspects of public worship.

Whilst we can learn and grow through prayer and meditation, connecting with and learning from other Christians (past and present) and through reflecting on our own experiences, we should always return to the Bible as the foundation. Everything that we are is challenged as we learn through reading and reflecting on scripture.

Preaching and/or teaching in church must be deeply rooted in God's word in the Bible, but should also focus on its application in our day to day lives and local situation - understanding and changed lives rather than just knowledge for its own sake. We should be inspired and changed by His word and prompted to act on that challenge, to be moved. It is the word of God and all He has done for us that evokes the worship of God, prompted by the Spirit of God. This has at least 3 implications for worship (in the local church), to be nurtured in practice –

1. CENTRED ON CHRIST.

Coming to Christ is clearly central to how we become Christians, but it is also important for the ongoing worship of the church. We are called to worship the God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and has drawn us into fellowship with himself by the Holy Spirit. Our worship therefore needs to focus on Jesus and all He has done for us and/or how we respond to that love and sacrifice. Corporate prayer can sometimes fail to reflect sufficiently the trinitarian nature of our faith, with the potential to lapse into generic conceptions of 'God'.

2. INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We need to be clear at this point, we are not talking about two kinds of worship - one 'in Spirit' and another 'in truth' but a single expression of worship that is simultaneously 'in Spirit and truth'.

Throughout scripture there is the closest possible relationship between the word and the Spirit, which works together like a bird in flight or like two scissor blades! However, this does not mean that to be engaged with the Holy Spirit is simply the same as listening to the word. It is not sufficient to study the Bible and leave the Holy Spirit in the background. Surely his presence is to be welcomed among us, as we open our lives to respond to the direction of God's word, enlightening our minds (1 Cor. 2:10-16), stirring our affections, (Gal 5:22-23), convicting our hearts (John 16:8-11) and assuring us of his love (Rom 8:15-16).

If we truly believe that the Holy Spirit of truth is present in our worship, challenging and renewing, then we should expect Him to be at work in us, sometimes in unexpected ways. He brings living water to quench the desert and birth new life. We are called to adoration of our God, to abandon ourselves in worship – head and heart. We are emotional beings and our emotions should be stirred by the amazing work of our glorious saviour.

3. **DRAWING US ALL TO THE FATHER.**

Jesus in John 14v6 says – He is the way to the Father and coming to the Father seems to be the ultimate goal in Christ.

In some churches, there would be those who would be dismissive of the authority of scripture altogether. In others, there would be those for whom the traditions of the church would carry as much weight as (and therefore in practice more weight than) scripture. What we may need to do is help one another to grow in confidence so that we are more secure in our identity and therefore, hopefully, more effective in our witness. Sitting under the word, rather than over it. Not using the Bible to attempt to reinforce our beliefs, but to humbly seek to understand what God is saying through his word rather than stating that we ‘know God’s mind’ on a matter.

B. HOW TO UNDERSTAND SCRIPTURE?

When we use the Bible – on our own, explaining it to others or when we use it in worship - we need to understand the importance of the context of what we read - both to its original audience and to us today. As British people, we are shaped by centuries of theology that has grown out of our European context, with its Greco-Roman cultural heritage.

Wise reflection is necessary to discern truth when comparing different translations and interpretations of the Bible text and we should therefore avoid selective and/or literal use of scripture without due consideration of context, historical and cultural setting and other translations where appropriate. For example, the Bible had to be translated from foreign languages with those languages having many words that simply don’t have an English equivalent. We also set what we read into the context of the rest of the Bible - because God doesn’t contradict himself and this can help us understand difficult passages.

Whilst we must recognise the limitations our own world view brings and do all we can to hear and respond to the true meaning of the words, as the Holy Spirit opens them up to us, we can still have confidence that God will speak to us through the scriptures, as he has to countless others over the centuries.

C. HOW DO WE HANDLE SCRIPTURE IN OUR SERVICES?

In using the Bible, we need to handle it appropriately and seek to present and explain its true meaning and its application. We believe we should use our God-given creativity to do this - so we are not restricted to any particular format - but should use the most appropriate ways to engage with its meaning and implications for us. We also need to think about those who will be present when we are reading and teaching the Bible and seek the Holy Spirit’s help that everyone will profit both from the message and the way it is presented.

The worship the Father seeks is a response to the truth of Scripture, as it is fulfilled in Jesus. Truth sets the agenda for our worship, shaping and motivating our praise. As such, we should encourage all who share in our worship together to read, memorise and meditate on God’s word (as the light to our paths).

APPENDIX 3: Baptism

Underlying Principles

We would strongly encourage all who come to faith in Christ to make a public affirmation of that faith as a statement of a new beginning in him. The Bible describes several instances where this is done by means of full immersion Baptism of the believer.

The Wheatley Community Church vision statement states that – ‘We believe we are being called by God to be an inclusive, accessible, welcoming and nurturing church community’. Inclusivity is a key value of our church community.

Background

Baptism, though very important is not a Primary doctrine that should cause division among fellow believers within the local church.

However, we recognise that there has been historically, and is today, a difference of opinion among Christians regarding this subject. It is therefore important to reflect on these different approaches -

1. Believers’ Baptism

A common position on this matter is that baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ, hence the term "Believers’ Baptism". Examples can be found in Acts 2:41, 8:31, 10:47-48.

Those holding to this practice believe that believers’ baptism, as described in the New Testament, involves the person being immersed or put completely under the water and then brought up again. Baptism by immersion is the "mode", or the way in which baptism was carried out. The Greek word "baptizo" means to plunge, dip, immerse something in water. In Mk 1: 15, people were baptised "in" the river Jordan and Mk 1: 10 says when Jesus had been baptised " He came up out of the water ". Moreover, the symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection implies baptism by immersion, see Rom 6: 3 - 6.

2. Infant Baptism

The practice of "Infant Baptism" administered to children of believing parents is an important alternative view. Those holding to this practice believe that such children belong to God’s covenant and community (Gen. 17:7). Therefore, they may be incorporated into the church by baptism, the sign of the covenant, and distinguished from the children of unbelievers (Acts 10:47; 1 Cor. 7:14). This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision (Gen. 17:9–14).

This covenant is realised when the child is later able to proclaim their own living faith for themselves in a personal, public profession of faith in Christ, such as is intended in the Anglican practice of confirmation.

Practice at Wheatley Community Church

Whilst it will be our practice at WCC to conduct full immersion believers’ baptism and not infant baptism, we wish to remain inclusive and so will also recognise and fully accept (including as members and leaders, where appropriate)

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those who were baptised as infants to believing parents and who have themselves made a public profession of faith in Christ.

WCC will provide support to and help prepare all those who wish to be baptised or, having been baptised as infants to believing parents, wish to make a public statement of a living faith in the presence of the church community. We will also welcome requests to hold dedication or thanksgiving services for infants.

Essentially Scripture does not specify any restrictions on who can perform baptisms. Therefore, if we believe in the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2: 4 - 10), there seems to be no need in principle to restrict the act of baptism to leaders. However, in order that people being baptised have a right understanding of what is happening, it is right for the church to safeguard the practice and keep it from abuse (see Mt 28: 18 - 20).